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WOMAN'S PLACE IN THE NEW CIVILIZATION

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The position which any group of individuals holds in society at any time depends upon two factors, the qualities which actually belong to the group, and the ideas concerning the group which are current at the time. Of these two, the actual physical and subjective qualities, which may conveniently be called the biological conditions, are much the more important. They are always hard to determine, but they are very persistent, and since they represent the facts of life, they are very powerful. They change very slowly, and if at any time the public ideas do not agree with them, then the ideas must change no matter how logical nor how well established they may be.

But ideas are also very powerful in, at least temporarily, determining social position, whether they agree with the physical and subjective facts of the class or not. In the past, they have exalted priesthoods, good or bad; they have enforced slavery, sometimes on inferior people, as the black race, and sometimes on superior people, as when Rome enslaved Greece. These ideas also change slowly; but in the case of industrial or military revolutions they may move with amazing rapidity. Thus in the case of American slavery, a change in dominant ideas transformed the blacks from chattels to equal citizenship in a few brief days, during which there could have been no appreciable change in their physical and mental qualities.

From this it is clear that the ideas must often have little correspondence with the actual qualities of the class whose position they determine. Ideas must, of course, have a cause; but once shaped in language, they may survive long after the conditions which created them have ceased to exist; or they may be carried over seas and grafted on alien people, under conditions where they would never have arisen. Backed by superstitions, religious sanctions, and most of all by long usage, they may come to be so ardently believed that the actual facts cannot be discerned; and they may

even become an end in themselves so that people may fight for their preservation, even when they feel that they no longer fit the facts of life. The English peerage, with its monopoly of votes, land, wealth, and hereditary privileges, is still upheld by the masses of the English people.

In judging of the position of women, the difficulties already mentioned are increased by the fact that in matters of sex the emotions generally lead the mind and obscure its action; and, besides this, any change in our beliefs or practices concerning women will disturb the vested interests and the daily adjustments of life of almost every man and woman alive. It is not to be wondered at, then, that our knowledge of the biological facts of sex is so limited; nor is it surprising that old ideas and new ideas are inextricably mixed; nor that in such a time of transition ideas are seldom brought to the test of the biological and psychological facts which we do possess.

For about forty years the physical and mental qualities of women have been subjected to careful analysis, in some cases with very little prejudice on the part of observers. To summarize these briefly, we may say: Women are shorter and lighter in weight than men. They are narrower at the shoulders than men and broader at the hips; man tapers from the shoulders downward while woman tapers from the hips upward to the shoulders and downward to the feet. She is longer in the body than man and shorter in the legs and arms; her leverage in both arms and legs is shorter than in men. Men are built on lines of movement more than women are, and in most of our athletic contests men's records are from a third to a half superior to those made by women. From the point of view of resistance, woman's general structure, considered from the point of view of her potential or actual motherhood, makes her less capable of standing and lifting for a considerable period than a man is.

In civilized communities, from 1 to 2 per cent more boys than girls are born, and the girls seem less subject to variation than the boys. Following Geddes and Thompson, we may say that women are anabolic; they gather and shape the forces of life; they are its conservers. Men, on the other hand, are katabolic; they tend to distribute and dissipate the forces of life; they are its destroyers. To put it differently, women are more passive than men; and men are more active on the physical side than women are.

The nervous system in the two sexes, compared with the general physical bulk, is almost the same in size; and of its qualitative differences we know nothing. No biologist can tell from a section of the brain whether it is that of a man or a woman. While each sex can probably do any intellectual work which the other can do, women are more emotional than men and reach conclusions by shorter routes. Men are more labored in their subjective processes; and they care more for logic and science than women do. The intellectual interests of women seem at present strongly personal and concrete, while men are more devoted to impersonal and abstract problems.

It is also recognized that a woman's life is more subject to periodicities than is that of a man. Not only is she subject to interruptions due to her potential motherhood but, if she becomes a wife and mother, her whole life breaks into three segments of about equal length. The first third, the period of girlhood and maidenhood, must be given to preparation for life; the next third, up to the age of forty-five or fifty, gathers around the problems of maternity and the family, and may be called the romantic period; the third part, from fifty to seventy-five has been largely wasted in the past, and promises to be one of the best periods in the future.

If we turn now to the ideas that determine woman's position, we find them in utter confusion. Until about 1870, they were pretty clearly established and they can be summed up in the statement that woman was man's inferior, physically and mentally. Her spiritual insight and her higher moral ideals were often recognized; but her proper social position was believed to be half way between that of a child and a man. Judaic-Christianity was largely responsible for this belief in Christendom. In both Judaism and Christianity, the heavenly hierarchy was purely patriarchal; and in the story of creation, Eve overwhelmed the race in ruin and brought suspicion on all her daughters, which even the promise that her seed should bruise the serpent's head could not dispel.

Early Christianity in its revolt against pagan sensuality developed an ascetic attitude towards life which recognized woman as the dangerous ally of evil. The fact that Jesus never married, that he had no children, and that he chose men alone as his active co-workers, backed by the Jewish attitude of Paul, gave women a subordinate place in the early Christian Church. The Patristic

writings exalted celibacy and placed the whole sexual life under a cloud of suspicion. Even the rise of Maryolatry, with its subsequent developments in chivalry, could not restore woman to her pagan freedom, but created for her instead a mingled ideal of nun, lady and woman.

Created from man, as an afterthought, woman was naturally inferior to her lord and dependent on him for protection and support. Legally and politically she was identified with her father, her brother, her husband or, if she survived all these, then with her grown son. These men spoke for her in church or in public; they recognized her natural curiosity and, suspecting her use of knowledge, they kept it from her. They provided her with work, collected her wages, and doled out her spending money. Her sexual life was dependent on the accidents of marriage, and she could not seek this realization but must wait demurely until some proper man sought her hand. If no suitor came wooing, she must live her life vicariously as best she could as maiden aunt or cousin.

This is a broad statement of the ideas which fixed woman's position in society in the past. Here and there a woman escaped through superior ability, or more often through the accident of having a radical father or no male relative to represent her, and then she ate of the tree of knowledge, managed her own property, and sometimes even governed a realm. But nearly all the women in Christendom not only meekly accepted their fate but also saw to it that other women kept within their assigned limits.

By 1870, the general democratic movement, as voiced in the Protestant Revolution and the French and American Revolutions, reached down to the woman's world. Mechanical inventions, together with larger political and social vision, disturbed the woman's older position in the self-contained home and forced her out into the larger world. Since then, women, and their sympathizers among men, have developed a whole range of new ideas concerning woman's relation to the society of which she is a part. They have declared that the individual man or woman is the unit of which society is composed, and that society can only be strong when each of these units is strong. They have declared that women's minds are equal to men's minds and that they can do any of the intellectual tasks which men have mastered. They have said that women can adapt themselves to the performance of any of the industries which men

formerly held as their own fields. They have insisted that women owe it to themselves and to society to become economically independent; and that women should be legally and politically emancipated from man's direction. Some of the bolder spirits have even held that a woman who wants a child, and can support it, has a right to choose its father where she will.

Out of this chaos of ideas, old and new, has emerged a new society; or at least the old order is broken up. In forty years, women have taken over education as their special function, excepting some of the best paid administrative positions and the highest reaches of teaching in the high schools, colleges and universities. Aided by the industrial revolution or driven by it, 8,000,000 women are now independent wage earners in the United States. Legal enactments have put them on a basis of economic equality with men so that they sell their services where they can, collect their own wages, and spend their money as they like. Three million women now have full suffrage in the United States, and the others will soon possess it. Meantime, they have their own clubs, enrolling more than a million women, their special activities and their special pleasures. They have won all this in open competition with men, though often aided by them; and few have stopped to ask if the new functions are in accordance with the basal physical and mental facts with which they must agree if they are to become permanent.

Let us examine some of these conquests from the point of view of woman's essential qualities and in the light of what we have learned during the last forty years. In formal education women have modelled their work directly on that built up for men, and by men, through the selective processes of hundreds of years. Below the college, nearly all our schools are co-educational, and boys and girls do the same work in the same way; even when the sexes are separated the courses of study that are offered are almost identical. Many of the colleges are co-educational; and those devoted exclusively to women, such as Wellesley, Vassar, Bryn Mawr and Smith, are less inclined to change the old curriculum than are the corresponding colleges devoted exclusively to men.

Under these conditions, women have demonstrated their ability to do all the exercises set for men; they have taken their fair share of honors; and last year they took 42 per cent of the A.B. degrees in American colleges and universities. There is no clear proof that

women's health has suffered from the strain of higher education. Today, 80 per cent of the teachers in America are women; and the more intelligent the community the larger is the percentage of women teachers. In states like Massachusetts, and in all of our American cities, there are hardly any men teaching in the elementary grades.

But students of biology and psychology are still agreed that there are essential differences in the minds of men and women, and students of education generally admit that our present education is developing distinctive marks of woman's leadership. There can be no doubt that, at least in the elementary grades, where woman's influence is predominant, we are doing admirable work in reading, story telling, biography, mythology and language work as a whole. On the other hand, nature study and the sciences in general have made almost no progress in the last twenty years, if one considers the country at large; and this notwithstanding the fact that our civilization has been predominately scientific since 1870. In the higher institutions of learning, women students are in the majority in the courses devoted to literature and to the general humanities while comparatively few of them are found in the sciences or in subjects resting on scientific bases, like engineering and architecture. No proof of these assertions can be offered in this place, but they seem clearly capable of demonstration.

If this is true, then it would seem that instead of feminizing an education devised by men, for men, thus making a bastard product fitting neither sex, it would be better to turn woman's education more in the direction of woman's qualities thus developing two normal and supplementary parts of our possible civilization. Let us admit that women have demonstrated their ability to do all the intellectual gymnastics devised for men, and then let us go on to find the supplementary values which each sex can offer in education. The two fields will overlap in a hundred directions, and women of a masculine type can still work exclusively in the fields mainly worked by men, while men of feminine qualities can work in the women's field.

On the side of industry, again, women have shown great ability in adapting themselves to varied occupations. And yet we are finding that long standing and lifting are very bad for women, and men and women alike agree in providing seats for women clerks, in forbidding night work for women, and in shortening their hours. Legis-

lation designed to protect women from excessive strain will automatically close some line of work to them while others, like mining and iron manufacturing, will remain closed. Women will not go back to their old occupations, for many of these have ceased to exist; all occupations are destined to undergo many changes in the future as public consciousness comes to recognize the fact that mere bulk of products can never justify us in destroying those who work.

Just where the line of separation between work for men and work for women will finally be drawn no one can now foresee. Probably there will remain here, as in education, a large common field. But meantime all earnest and fair-minded men and women should set themselves to finding what women can best do of all the work that stands open to workers in the modern industrial field. Young girls should be headed away from occupations that seriously threaten their fullest physical life; and we should work here, as in the field of education, for a complementary adjustment of work where men and women would seldom enter into competition.

On the political side, the same conditions confront us. Independent working women, having a legal right to their earnings, must be given a fair share in determining how the public life shall be directed. But here again women, as the makers of homes and the mothers of children, must have more interest than men have hitherto shown in all that comes under the heading of social legislation. On the other hand, they doubtless have less interest than men in matters of administration, finance, and defense; but we have too long had a one-sided administration of public life. Women will bring great gifts to the public service, and these gifts will be of greatest value where they are supplementary to men's natural interests. A large range of public activities will again overlap, and some men and some women will function mainly in the camps of the opposite sex. The effort, meantime, must be to call out the special gifts of both men and women rather than to have them compete with each other in a world representing only one part of our human interests.

In the field of woman's personal and social relations the changes during these last years have been very much less sweeping than in the other fields already discussed. A woman teacher, or stenographer, who has enjoyed all the educational advantages of men, who votes, and who has achieved such economic independence that she

not only supports herself but also those who are dependent on her, still lives in a world of social ideas and limitations only a little less restricted than that in which her mother lived. If she goes to a state convention of her profession she preferably goes with some other woman; if she stays at a hotel it is best for her to have some other woman with her. She shuns the hotel lobby and public restaurants and theaters in the evening, especially if she is alone. She hesitates to engage a man in conversation on the opposite side of a public table or on a train, or to invite a male friend to dine at a hotel or to go to a theater with her. And yet a man may do any of these things as naturally as he would ride in a street car, and without giving the matter a second thought. If a woman sinned against social usage, even to the extent of smoking in public, her punishment would be very much more severe than that meted out to a man who committed the same offense.

Admitting that there is something in the natures of men and women that makes man the pursuer and woman at least the seeming pursued, it still remains true that women who accept intellectual, business and political rivalry with men, and who still claim the older social privileges, exemptions and securities of the sex, will have a difficult time in making their personal adjustments. The women who first entered college, or went into business, found they could not stop there, but must go further in the movement for personal freedom. Here and there, we have women who have made their individual adjustments to the new social demands, but most women still claim the social protection of the old order and the personal opportunities of the new. It will require fine discernment and great tact to complete woman's social enfranchisement without seriously impairing those checks and balances built up through long centuries to protect women from the undesired familiarity of men. But this is doubtless the next step to be taken.

To summarize this paper: Women have left their old world and are now wandering in uncharted lands; but they are still both physically and mentally women. This fact will survive even if our present theories and prejudices are all finally forgotten. In the new world which they have entered, the advanced guard of women is mainly competing with men. Since men formerly claimed that they were doing all that needed to be done, women probably had to prove their ability to do man's work before men would let them

do their own. The proof has now been given, and the condition of competition between the sexes, with the sex antagonisms thus engendered, is wasteful and unsatisfactory. But the way has meantime been opened for the next step to be taken, where men and women can work in mutual freedom to determine their reciprocal functions in learning, in industry, in government and in organized society.